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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on some of the issues from a study that questioned the validity of the proposal advanced by the influential North American curriculum movement referred to as "Discipline-Based Art Education" (DBAE); that the methods and understanding of artists, art critics, aestheticians, and art historians can be represented in a model of artistic knowledge that is framed as a coherent and integrated system of naive to sophisticated performances. The interpretation of data focused on the pedagogical dialogue about the authentic representation of artistic practice, specifically the role of the journal, or process diary, as an example of the way in which answers to empirical questions are more often than not counterintuitive. It reports that the study's two respondents are at best intuitive in their meta-representations of their performances and at worst misrepresent what they do, albeit in an unconscious and therefore concealed way. It finds that the manner in which the two produce their works, including process diary use, is sophisticated in ways that do not align with the characteristics and categorizations set out in DBAE. The paper elaborates on these findings and on the two respondents' methods of producing art works. Contains 18 references. (BT)

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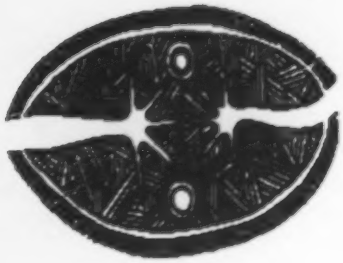

InSEA

"Art as a Discipline Concealed in the Beliefs and Practices of Two Artists"

by

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Art As A Discipline Concealed In The Beliefs And Practices Of Two Artists

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This paper focuses on some of the issues emergent from a study which questioned the validity of the proposal advanced by the influential North American curriculum movement referred to as *Discipline Based Art Education*; that the methods and understanding of artists, art critics, aestheticians, and art historians can be represented in a model of artistic knowledge that is framed as a coherent and integrated system of naive to sophisticated performances. The pedagogical dialogue about the authentic representation of artistic practice was the focus of the interpretation of the data emergent from the study.

The research reported on an ethnographic study of the beliefs of two artists (Respondents *A* and *B*) and set out to reveal the concealed frames of reference which motivated their practice. It is sufficient to describe the two artists selected for the study as follows; *A* is a female university teacher in the fine arts, of twenty years experience at the middle level of promotion, aged in her early fifties. *B*, a male, shares an almost identical level of promotion and experience in a faculty of fine arts, but at another university. Both artists were considered as elite respondents because they had an established practice and a history of successful public exhibitions; they also had experience working as art educators in a tertiary setting. (The latter requirement sought to enhance the possibility that the links being drawn between art and art education were not only those inferred by the investigator but were also the result of informed comment by the respondents). While qualitative in its approach the study focused on the semantic analysis of texts emergent in the investigation. Texts were presented in the form of: the literature of *Discipline Based Art Education*, transcripts from the respondent artists, documents relating to the respondents including their artworks, and descriptions resulting from observations.

The evidence emergent in the investigation suggested that understanding is not transparent in the two artist's explanation of the works that they made. It emerged that the reflective insights of the two respondents effectively misrepresented their motives and performances. Cover or folk terms ("response categories") were used in the study to both formulate structured questions which verify or account for the emergent data and as an "organising" devise to report on the triangulation of the emergent data, which, in turn, facilitated the uncovering of implicit meanings. They provided evidence of complex motivation, as well as incoherence and denial in the respondent's maintenance of their practice.

The study challenged the conception of art as a coherent and reflectively integrated practice as it is represented in the sophisticated performances of the two artists who responded to the investigation. The study concluded that there is little evidence that artistic practice, as observed in the two respondent artists either supported the model of systematic practice presented by *Discipline Based Art Education* or, more generally, entailed a fruitful archetype of educational practice in the visual arts.

Because of the pervasiveness of DBAE as a model for the design of curricula both in Australia and North America, the basis for the representation of the practices of art exemplified in a number of models demanded examination. As part of the process of this examination, the role of the journal, or process diary, emerged as a example of the way in which answers to empirical questions, such as "what is it that artists do"? are more often than not, counter intuitive. It is the purpose of this paper to focus on this aspect of artistic practice, exemplified in the emergent data.

The respondents in this study are at best intuitive in their meta-representations of their performance and at worst thoroughly misrepresent what they do, albeit in an unconscious and therefore concealed way. As a model for achievement in DBAE neither outcome holds out much hope as a systematic representation of the agency of artistic practice in curriculum. The manner in which works are produced by *A* and *B* , including the use of a journal or diary, is sophisticated in ways which do not align with the characterisations and categorisations set out in DBAE. DBAE argues that art works are produced as the result of a sequence of practices which range from naive to sophisticated. Even though it goes without challenge that *A* and *B's* artworks are sophisticated, what they do in the making of their works however, is sophisticated as a teleological result of their works. Thus the 'sophistication' of the teleological ends of *A* and *B's* practices

supervene on their motives and understanding in contingent ways. In a Foucauldian sense, then, the genealogy of *A* and *B's* texts (art works and reports) reveal no evidence of the systematic antecedents of sophisticated practice anticipated in DBAE, as there are no systematic implications emergent in the intentional beliefs of the two artists that could account for the necessary realisation of their practice.

This is not to say that *A* and *B* are not directed by policies of art making and of being an artist. Indeed *A* and *B* are driven by their habits and conditions of work. Nor is it to suggest that a cultural discipline of art making does not exist within institutions of art education, nor that these institutional policies are inappropriate to the teaching of art. Rather it is to say that *A* and *B's* intentions are complex, emergent and idiosyncratic, and that outside of imitating their finished works (textual hegemony in the Foucauldian sense) the aetiology of their works carries no disciplined implications for the general advancement of sophisticated outcomes.

Clark and Zimmerman construct a DBAE curriculum model which represents the roles and activities of the professional artist, critic, art historian, and aesthetician as models for outcomes.(1979) In their paper "A Walk in the Right Direction" they present a continuum of behaviours related to each role. The student gains increased mastery in each of the roles as they systematically progress from a naive to a sophisticated state. This progress is facilitated as a result of teacher intervention, in which students are "coached" in the conventions of practice in each of the four roles. It is important to be mindful at this point that it was the goal of this study not to contest the conventional origins of DBAE which have been shown to be complex (Brown 1993, Efland 1990). Rather, the goal was to investigate the beliefs of two artists, acknowledged as sophisticated, for evidence of systematic progression as it is set out by DBAE.

As Vernon Howard points out, and as the results of this study suggest, "understanding" and "knowing how" to go on cannot be reduced to the mere ability to go on, as it might be represented in a snapshot of a 'conventional' performance enacted by *A* or *B* at any one time. (1982) Howard writes that one can continue to "understand" long after losing the abilities once demonstrated. "Understanding" does not imply "knows". He refers to Wittgenstein in attempting to explain the connection between understanding and learning a technique;

> Can one learn this knowledge? Yes; some can. Not, however, by taking a course in it, but through "experience". - Can someone else be a man's teacher in this? Certainly. From time to time he gives him the right *tip* - This is what learning and teaching are like here.-- What one acquires here is not a technique; one learns correct judgments. There are also rules, but they do not form a system, and only experienced people can apply them right.
> (p. 63).

In the DBAE model presented by Clark and Zimmerman, the provided role descriptions refer to the attainment of a set of methods, backed up by technical accomplishment. As Howard and Wittgenstein point out, neither of these two attainment's would, by themselves, function as a necessary condition for the attainment of "knowledge" or "understanding" about art. They suggest that "knowledges" and "understandings", are, instead, partly acquired through the application of "correct judgements", which are in turn acquired through "experience". This possibility is not canvassed by Clark and Zimmerman, Greer, Eisner, or other DBAE theorists.

An example of the role of "correct judgement", in the Wittgensteinian sense, can be found in an analysis of the triangulated data from respondent *B* apropos of the included/cover term, "My use of sketchbooks and collections of photographs as a way for me to organise my ideas" (Ch.4). A propensity for *B* to inter-change the concepts of phenomenal contemplation and documentation emerged, whereby the parameters of his documentary forms, such as sketch books, notebooks and collections of photographs - set conditions which govern what he sees, (and therefore what he does as a painter). The folk meaning of "my use of sketch books/notebooks", emerges in such connotations as; "a way for me to gain personal insight"; "a way (for me) to have phenomenal experiences"; " a way (for me) to document ideas for future reference"; " (they provide) ideas which can be used as direct reference in my painting"; and, "(they establish) the parameters of my painting". It is revealed that *B* is able to make "correct judgements" in respect of "knowing how" to go on in this aspect of his practice, because of the way in which he has gained "experience" in inter-changing concepts of phenomenal contemplation with the use of documents.

B's notion of the way a sketchbook functions is significant because, of all of the cover terms relating to *B* this term appears to satisfy the conditions set out by Clark and Zimmerman for sophisticated attainment in the processes of art making most completely. In particular, *B* conceives of sketch books as a set of methods, substantiated by certain technical accomplishments integrated with the sub-disciplines of aesthetic and critical reflection. However, consider his first folk identity - "a way for me to gain personal insight". Gaining

"personal insight" doesn't necessarily follow as a systematic practice from the use of documents or sketchbooks, nor from the making of them. *B's* definition of "personal insight" is thus asymmetrically, or uniquely related to his concept of sketch books. In the unstructured interview undertaken at the commencement of this study, *B* spoke at length about the way in which he used such things as photographs, as a way of organising his ideas. However in the later, structured interview, he maintained that it was mainly experience, in particular the "lived" experience of landscape which formed these ideas for painting."(SI, P29). *B* placed emphasis on the importance of record keeping and dating his sketches, both for its own sake, and to look back on so that he could trace the continuity in his interests (SI, P35). However, it was directly observed and noted by the investigator that *B* used photographic stimulus for all the paintings which he was working on at that time (UObs Appendix 1). The "drawing up" of his paintings was done in graphite and was nearly always based literally on the photograph (UObs, Appendix 1). In these cases, although the photo references may have been chosen from amongst a collection, the ideas transmitted to the paintings by *B* appeared to be as much constrained by the photographic stimulus as they were by any other observable personal insights. Thus an identity was observed to exist between the photo, and the personal insight. However, *B* used his photographic sources in such a way that the value added changes that were made by way of their translation into his paintings are opaque. Choosing photographs to copy is not in itself a sophisticated process, quite the contrary. Thus the photographs he chooses give no clue as to the personal insight that, as *B* implies in his unstructured interview, serve as the basis for the transformation of these photographs in his works. What is regarded as the sophisticated component of the relation between personal insights and the photo documents chosen by *B* is concealed in their tacit (Howard's "judgement") transformation onto the painting. As to this we gain no insight from the process of choice alone and must look to the finished paintings themselves. *B's* use of photographic sources thus beg the question of sophistication in his practice, the answers to which are teleological.

"Personal insight" is not in itself sophisticated since one can have naive personal insights. "Personal insight" has no implications for artistic expression, since artists can make and interpret artworks and sketchbooks in sophisticated ways which singularly misrepresent themselves. Thus there could be no possible reason for believing that *B's* folk definition has a disciplined basis for a sophisticated presence in his understanding. Indeed an artist might have sophisticated "personal insights" but produce terrible sketchbooks and naive works, a point constantly made in the critique of portfolio assessment in art education (Boughton et al 1996). Thus, even folk terms which are apparently consistent with DBAE constructs of sophisticated artistic behaviour, such as those set out by *B* under the cover term "My use of sketchbooks and collections of photographs as a way for me to organise my ideas" are revealed as contingent to *B*, that is, they remain to be uniquely interpreted for *B*. As Howard would say, for *B*, the folk definition is singularly integrated into *B's* understanding of how to go on. Indeed observations of *B's* current preparatory sketches reveal them as startlingly banal and amateurish, as personal insights, and the relation to their target work in progress is opaque. They are perhaps, after discussion, even opaque to *B*. If there are cognitive precepts of sophisticated autonomy in making and using sketchbooks for *B's* "personal insights", their principles remain concealed. It was not necessary to reveal these precepts, even if they are real, to satisfy the goals of the study reported on in this paper. It is sufficient to register their importance as a step missing in Clark and Zimmrman's DBAE teleology.

The basis for *B's* representation of sketchbooks as "personal insight" in this way, cannot be derived as a systematic methodology since there is nothing about sketchbooks or any extension of the term, or the conventional way they are made, that necessitates the gaining of "personal insights". Keeping diaries and documents is not a discipline in the predictive, nor in the necessary sense of the term. Further more, personal insights are shared between all four of the separate DBAE disciplines and, in the same asymmetrical way as observed in *B*, are not insured by the systematic methods entailed in each.

This discussion has implications for the requirement of the *New South Wales Visual Arts Syllabus (Years 7-10)*, for students to keep a Visual Arts Process Diary (VAPD),which generally takes the form of sketch books or notebooks, and for the "portfolios" advocated by *Arts Propel* which are purportedly modelled on the practice of artists. The sketchbook typically contains references to and interpretations of the work of artists whose intentions are considered to be similar to those of the student, and examples of the kinds of "problem solving" exercises that artists supposedly engage in. The New South Wales 7-10 visual arts syllabus emphasises that in order to achieve a resolution of their art making intentions, all students should engage in a sequence of learning experiences. These are described in terms of "exploring", "developing", and "resolving" activities, with the syllabus providing explicit details of the kinds of teaching and learning activities (including the use of the process diary), which will ensure the attainment of this outcome (1988). The emphasis on the folio in the *Arts Propel* project in Boston has a similar requirement for students to document the processes entailed in art making. In both these instances there is an acknowledgment that what artists do is more than the acquisition of sets of technical skills; that there is in addition a mental stepwise process entailed in making artworks. For the reasons outlined in the preceding paragraphs, however, the DBAE

approach to curricula, specifically in relation to beliefs about art making conventions (such as keeping a "process diary" or notebook), should not necessarily be viewed by art teachers as a way towards achieving invariable success in the practice of art making. The study did not question the fact that artists use diaries. Indeed, even though *B* refers explicitly to documentation and keeping diaries or "journals", there is no reason to expect that a rich interpretation of his work can be converted into a guiding set of approaches to art making that will produce similar sophisticated outcomes for others.

The stepwise reduction of curriculum sequencing, which is characteristic of competency based and outcomes approaches lies at the heart of Clark and Zimmerman's sequencing of artistic practices from naive to sophisticated. *B's* mysterious transfiguration of his photographs into paintings remain unexplained, since *B's* sophisticated ends in using the photographs in his paintings cannot be reduced to a step by step set of mimicked performances. Rather it is the teleology of his artworks as ends that determines the sophistication of his artistic performances, for it is conceivable that even very sophisticated techniques (for example, reduction firing in ceramics) can be the hosts for naive art works. In true teleological fashion the teacher may be required to begin with the work, such as *B's* painting in progress, judge whether it is sophisticated as art, and only then try to correlate the sophisticated characteristics of the work with the history of its production. Knowing how to make certain recognisable artistic practices sophisticated, involves understanding the basis, hint, or principle on which they are linked into a network of procedures.

Instead of looking to 'transparent' outcomes as a way of ensuring sophisticated levels of attainment in art making, assessors may need to refer to something like Howard, Scheffler and Wittgenstein's notion of the application of "correct judgements" instead. Arthur Danto has long argued that the authority for the crucial transfigurative link that joins up performances with sophisticated artistic ends is located in the theories of the artworld (1964). For respondent *A* who is somewhat intimidated by the artworld, and respondent *B* who feels besieged by art critics, the link is emergent within the cover terms. A generally romantic theory of art, supported by both *A* and *B* is partly embraced for the protection it affords their egos against the competitive reality of maintaining a high ranking membership of the artworld. In this respect their theories of art are strategically defensive. It is pertinent to refer to the claim by Bruner and Rosaldo, that the stories people tell often shape, rather than simply reflect human conduct (p.129)

The teleology of artistic "sophistication" in DBAE leads to the realisation that there may be two anomalous discourses at work in the description of art making. One is the discourse of artistic lives, the other the discourse of artistic works. It is possible that critical analysis of the empirical states of artistic practice may run parallel and rarely intersect with the nature of artistic works. When they do, the intersections may be theoretically opaque within the relation between practice and works (Beardsley 1958, p.60). The study took the latter possibility seriously. If there was any force to the integration of the sub-disciplines argued in the theory of DBAE it is cast into doubt by this possibility.

The notion that the single artwork, the "major work" could be seen as an anachronistic spectacle, and that the use of the process diary as an agent of qualitative problem solving may be a profound misrepresentation of artistic practice is something that is also addressed in the *NSW Visual Arts Stage 6 (Years 11-12)* syllabus. Through the production of a work or several works during the HSC course, students are given the opportunity to demonstrate their application of knowledge and understanding and critical judgement acquired through experience. The syllabus states that works produced over time provide the possibility for students to establish their intentions as artists and to develop courses of action for their own practice. It is suggested that "bodies of evidence" located in a number of works that students make over time could be a more fruitful location for evidence of a sophisticated level of practice. In this context Vernon Howard's reference to the suggestion by Wittgenstein that the application of correct judgments about knowledges and understandings (about art), acquired through experience is a mark of sophisticated performance, and is embodied in the work of art or craft, is pertinent. (p 63)

The works students produce could be assessed on the basis that knowing how to make certain recognisable artistic practices sophisticated, involves understanding the basis, hint, or principle on which they are linked into a network of procedures. To overlook this conceptual link it could be argued is to fall into the naive error of searching for implications in art practice for art pedagogy.

In *Border Crossings*, Henry Giroux makes the case for a pedagogy of difference, and quotes Teresa de Laurenetis who calls for "...an ongoing effort to create new spaces of discourse, to re-write cultural narratives, and to define the terms of another perspective- a view from 'elsewhere' . What Giroux suggests is that there should be a critical questioning of the omissions and tensions that exist between the master narratives and hegemonic discourses that make up the curriculum (1993, p.104). This paper proposes that the master narrative of DBAE and its pervasive influence on the content of visual arts curriculum could be critically interrogated against other texts, histories, memories, experiences and narratives.

Giroux says that the curricula offered to students is characterised by its representation of one view, that of the dominant culture (p.235). The representation of the practices of art in DBAE, is nearly always characterised by the narrowness of the representation of a field that has always been recognised as being particularly diverse and idiosyncratic. Moreover, the representation of a particular cultural narrative and version of knowledge, as is represented by proponents of DBAE, is something that Giroux would question, since, he says, difference is important both as a marker for including specific forms of knowledge into the curriculum, and as a basis for developing a pedagogy that studies... (knowledge)... dialectically (p.236).

Giroux writes of the "diverse borders of culture as potentially vibrant centres of resistance and creativity - places where new identities and alliances can and are being forged in the re-writing of history and the reclamation of pluralist identities" (p.239). He says that increasingly a number of theorists and groups are arguing that culture does not consist of a single narrative, that the division between high and low culture is itself a historical and political construction, and that the production and reception of culture is constituted within a variety of forms and audiences. He maintains that for these reasons there will be a battle in the universities over the canon, and in the schools over a curriculum of diversity (p.239). The representation of the practices of art in many DBAE-based curricula do little more than represent a privileged view of the artworld, which nearly always neglects the diverse borders of culture.

The inclusion of the frames, the conceptual framework and the practices of art in the *NSW Stage 6* (Senior Secondary) syllabus will contribute towards student understanding of how each frame can be used to set up different relations between artists, artworks, the world and the audience. Giroux would say that in this respect, the syllabus acknowledges that principles can be illustrated with a "sense of voice, with somebody's story", and that these stories can become the basis for analysing a whole range of stories that are hidden within the stories. (p16) An understanding of the frames, the conceptual framework and the practices of art enables students to 'peel back' the layers of meaning embedded in the artwork/s they make, study and write about. The "language" students bring to the work that they do determines it's meaning; the experience of simply making the work (artworks or artwriting)will never speak for itself.

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